

The Case of the Lord and Lady *Stafford*, and their Copy-hold Tenants, of the Mannors of *Thornbury*, *Oldbury* and *Falsfield*. 124A



Hat there is an Act now depending in this Honourable House of Commons, to confirm an Agreement signed and sealed by the Lord and Lady *Stafford*, and by most of the Customary Tenants, and inrolled in Chancery.

The reason why the Agreement was not annexed to the Act, and made part of it, (that so it might have been read in this Honourable House) was because it consisted of an hundred sheets of Paper, and was thought it would have been too much trouble to this Honourable House, to read such a large Bill three times over as that would have been.

That no Persons of Full age are bound by the said Act, except such who have signed and sealed the said Agreement; and all others who have not signed and sealed the same Agreement, are left to the old and antient Customes of the said Mannors, except they give their assents to the same within one Year next after the passing of the said Act. And that no Infants, or Persons out of the Realm, are bound by the said Act, except they assent to the said Agreement within one Year next after their Full age, or coming into *England*: And in the mean time are left unto the old and antient Customes of the said Mannors, as appears by the Provisoes in the said Act. So that the said Act leaves all persons that shall not assent to the said Agreement within the times aforesaid, in the same plight and condition that they are now in.

And as to the matter mentioned in the said Act to be omitted out of the said Agreement, and provided for by the said Act, it was intended by all Parties that it should have been inserted in the said Agreement, and was so thought to have been, and the contrary not perceived untill after the said Agreement was signed and sealed. For redressing of which omission, it was concluded between the Agents of the Tenants, (by the consent of the Tenants) and the Lords Agent, that the same should be provided for in the Act, which is accordingly done: Yet to prevent all Scruples at the providing for this omission in the said Act, there is a Proviso in the Act to this effect; *That none shall be bound or concluded by the said Act, or have any benefit thereby, except they shall by writing under their hands and seals, consent to the said Matters omitted out of the said Agreement.*

That several Customes very prejudicial to the Tenants, are altered by the said Agreement: as,

1. The taking away of all Forfeitures from Copy-holders of Inheritance.
2. The reducing of the Fines and Heriots to a certainty, which was before uncertain, and at the will of the Lord.
3. The giving liberty unto any Copy-holder of Inheritance, to surrender his Lands (by way of Settlement) to his or her own use for Life, with Remainder or Remainders to the Husband, Wife, Child, Children, or next Heir of the person surrendering, without any Fine for such surrender.
4. The taking away this most unreasonable Custom, (*viz.*) That if any Widdow seized of the first Husbonds Land as Tenant in Dower, shall marry another Husband and dye such Husband surviving her, that then such second Husband shall hold such first Husbonds Lands during his Widdowhood; which Custom is so mischievous and prejudicial to the Heir, that such second Husband hath kept the Children and Grandchildren of such first Husband during their lives, from their Fathers and Grandfathers Estates, by reason whereof they in their Minorities have been exposed to have relief of the Parish.

That the Tenants are to be at the Charges of the passing of the said Act, and that it hath already cost them near three hundred pounds in pursuance of the said Act and Agreement. And that there have been Suits of Law at intervals of time, between the now Lord and Lady *Stafford*, and the Ancestors of the said Lady, and the Tenants and their Ancestors, (to the great prejudice of the Tenants) from about the tenth year of the Reign of the late King *James*, untill this Agreement was made; and are likely to break out again, after the now Lord *Stafford*'s death, if the said Act do not pass, notwithstanding the said Agreement; seeing that the Lord *Stafford* is seized of the said Mannors only in the Right of his Lady, who is Tenant in Tail of the said Mannors, and so the Agreement only obligatory to the said Lord during his life.

That notice hath been affixed in writing (according to an Order of a Committee of this Honourable House of Commons) at the respective Church-doors of the respective places concerned, that the said Act is depending in this Honourable House, to the intent that if any persons concerned in the Customes of the said Mannors, had any thing to offer against the passing of the said Act, they might appear before the aforesaid Committee on Monday the second of this instant month *January*: And that no persons concerned in the said Customes did then appear, or have since appeared, to offer any thing against the passing of the said Act.

That a Copy of the aforesaid Order of the said Committee, hath been publicly read in the Churches and Chappe's of *Thornbury*, *Oldbury*, and *Falsfield* aforesaid, and at a Court held for the said Mannors of *Thornbury*, *Oldbury*, and *Falsfield*; and a Copy of the said Order likewise read in the Market of *Thornbury*, and affixed unto a Post in the Market-place there.

